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ABSTRACT

A study investigated college students' (n=207) attitudes toward foreign students. Subjects read a job summary of a student applicant and evaluated the candidate for job success potential, likability, and likelihood of personal adjustment. They were then given an opportunity to volunteer or decline to offer various degrees of hospitality to the candidate. Sex and qualifications of the candidates were held constant; the only variable was national origin: Africa; East (China or India); or West (France or United States). The American students rated students from Africa lower on likability and personal adjustment than they did candidates from the West. No differences were found on job success and hospitality measures. Gender and ethnicity of the evaluators proved to be important factors. Implications for immigrants, international students, and various social psychological theories of prejudice are discussed. Contains 37 references. (Author/MSE)

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"THEY'RE ALL ALIKE TO ME":

STUDENT ACCEPTANCE OF FOREIGN STUDENTS

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Abstract

College student participants (207) read a job summary of a student applicant and evaluated the candidate for Job Success, Likability, and Personal Adjustment. They then were given an opportunity to volunteer or decline to offer various degrees of hospitality. Sex and qualifications of the candidate were held constant. The only variable was national origin of the candidate, which was either Africa, East (China or India), or West (France or U.S.A.). The American students rated the candidates from Africa lower on Likability and Personal Adjustment than they did the candidates from the West. There were no differences on Job Success and the hospitality measures. Gender and ethnicity of the evaluators proved to be important factors. Implications for immigrants, international students, and various social psychology theories of prejudice are discussed.

"They're all alike to me":

An exploratory study of student acceptance of foreigners

Because of the history of slavery in the United States, studies of prejudice and discrimination in the United States have typically focused on black/white relations. However, with the increasing number of immigrants and international students in the U.S., there is a pressing need to study the relationships between Americans and foreigners. Two pertinent areas of study with regard to migrants include the work place and the university campus.

Only a few studies of discrimination against immigrants in the work place exist and most of these are from the sociological literature (e.g., Evans & Kelley, 1991). Furthermore, none of these investigates conditions in the United States. Evans and Kelley (1991) found that in Australia, employers will *not* discriminate if doing so means less profit; they are, however, willing to *say* they will discriminate against immigrants, indicating that prejudice is alive and well (Evans & Kelley, 1991). In a study conducted in Canada (Berry, Kalin, & Taylor, 1977), respondents indicated less willingness to interact in business and personal relationships with immigrants than with members of the majority groups In another study, also Canadian, Kalin and Rayko (1978) attempted to overcome the problem opinion surveys have of respondents making socially desirable responses by studying reactions to subtle ethnic differences: accented speech. In this study, which is particularly relevant to the current one, participants acting as personnel consultants evaluated job applicants for positions varying in social status. The researchers found that the higher the status of a job, the lower a foreign-accented speaker was rated. The job candidates in their study had equal educational levels and had the same qualifications and verbal fluency. The only variable was the job candidate's accent.

Prejudice and discrimination can also be problems for foreign students on campuses, where the number of international students in the U.S. is rapidly increasing and has almost reached 3% of college and university enrollment in the U.S. (Zikopoulos, 1992). Again, few studies investigate this issue, and all are limited to *perceived* prejudice. Sandhu and Asrabadi (1994), in developing an acculturative stress scale that assesses the psychological needs of foreign students, found perceived discrimination to be their main concern, along with alienation. Other studies have found social isolation to be high among international students (e.g., Owie, 1982), particularly those from Asia (Abe & Zane, 1990; Sue & Zane, 1985; Keiter, 1990; Yang, Teraoka, Eichenfield & Audas, 1994). In two studies perception of prejudice proved to be a significant predictor of acculturative stress for foreign students (Mehta, 1995) and for Asian Indian immigrants (Mehta & Farina, 1994). Different levels of perception of prejudice was found among the various groups of students. White international students in the southern United Sates perceived less prejudice than did international students who were Black, South Asian, and East Asian (Mehta, 1995). Sodowsky and Plake (1992) found similar differences in their study of acculturation differences among international scholars and immigrants at a mid-western university.

To date no one has investigated actual, rather than perceived, prejudice toward foreign students. The current study attempts to do just that, extending the earlier findings of Mehta (1995), by investigating whether those groups of foreign students who *perceive* more prejudice actually are the target of greater prejudice and discrimination. The current study was designed to be exploratory and to examine American students' attitudes toward foreign student job applicants who originate from different countries. Note that the stimuli are foreign students who are on

their way to becoming immigrants, as they are seeking employment. Therefore the focus is migrants who are somewhere between sojourners and permanent residents.

Based on the findings from several field studies of ethnic relations (e.g., Berry, Kalin, & Taylor, 1977; Brewer & Cambell, 1976; Levine & Cambell, 1972; and Struch & Schwartz, 1989) that support "a weaker and modified version of Rokeach's (1960) Belief Congruence Theory" (Brown, 1995, p. 180), it is hypothesized that the more similar a culture is to American dominant culture, the more favorable American students will be toward a person of that culture. The nationalities selected for study are American (Midwest), French, Indian, Chinese, and Kenyan, listed in order of decreasing similarity to the American South, based on the categories of religion, language, political orientation, and national wealth. China and India were chosen because these are the countries that are supplying so many students to American universities. African and European countries were selected to explore the role of race in acceptance. And finally, Kansas City was included as a mild degree of cultural difference.

Method

Participants

Two-hundred-seven undergraduate students at a Southern urban Level II university volunteered for participation. The sample was comprised of 70 men and 137 women (mean age =22 years), and the ethnic make up was 75% White and 25% ethnic minority (mostly African American, few Asians, Native Americans, and mixed). The students were recruited from lower level psychology classes and were offered extra course credit in return for their participation. They were treated in accordance with the "Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct" (American Psychological Association, 1992).

Materials

Five nearly identical job summaries were used as stimuli. An example of one follows:

> Ms. M is in her final term at the University of Alabama at Birmingham [*not the university where the study was conducted*]. Her major is business and she has thus far obtained a 3.00 GPA. She has worked two summers as a student intern in the business office at UAB. She is an active member of several student organizations, including the school newspaper, Student Government, Big Sisters Association, and intramural basketball.
>
> One professor and two employers have provided letters of recommendation. All of them were asked to comment on her speaking and writing skills, as well as other abilities. Their average rating of Ms. M's ability on a 1-to-10 scale (with 10 being outstanding) is 8.5.
>
> Although she moved to Birmingham from India in 1993, Ms. M has indicated that she likes the Montgomery area and hopes to settle here.

The five summaries were identical except for the letter of the job candidate's name and the place of origin. The five letters used were J K L M N, which were chosen for their neutral connotations. The five places of origin were China, India, Kenya (Africa), France, and Kansas City, Missouri, respectively. The sex of the job candidate was always female so that gender of the stimulus person was not a variable.

Procedure

Testing occurred in one 15-minute session. Participants were told that their help was needed as student personnel consultants. They were asked to read a description of a job candidate who, they were told, had already been hired. The rationale they were given was that we were trying to find out who makes good hiring decisions. Efforts were made to reduce socially desirable responses by indicating that we were particularly interested in foreign students where our usual assessments may not always be applicable, and by imploring then to be honest and candid. Also, we assured them confidentiality. After the students gave informed consent form,

they read one of five job summaries and completed an anonymous questionnaire that contained 14 items evaluating the candidate, one filler item asking how good a judge of people the participant is, and 4 demographic items. After they turned in the questionnaire and summary, they were given a Hospitality Sign-up Sheet. Here they were told that because we would like to be of some service to the newcomers, who often do not know anyone locally, we were looking for a few students who would be willing to offer some hospitality. The check-list format allowed students to volunteer or decline to offer various degrees of hospitality, such as allowing the job candidate to telephone them for information or showing her around the city for part of a day. Again, in an attempt to reduce socially desirable responses, the items were worded so that the student could decline to offer the hospitality in a gracious a manner. They were then asked to furnish their name and telephone number. Finally at the end of this sheet they were asked to recall from what country their candidate was originally and what her grade point average was.

Measures and Scoring

Manipulation Check

We asked the students to recall where the candidate was originally from as a check on the saliency of the manipulation. This item was scored as correct or incorrect.

Dependent Variables

The 14 questions evaluating the candidate were designed to measure how successful at her job, how likable, and how well adjusted personally the participant judged her to be. The item responses were arranged along a 6-point Likert-type scale. An example is "How capable of a worker do you think this person is?" Possible responses ranged from 1= very capable to 6= not at all capable. Again, in an attempt to reduce socially desirable answers, the negative anchors were

worded with a positive slant, allowing the participant to more comfortably assign a negative evaluation. To discourage participants from circling the same number every time, for half the items a high number indicated a positive evaluation, whereas for the other half a high number indicated a negative one. Furthermore, half the item responses were arranged 1-6, whereas the other half were arranged 6-1. In scoring, appropriate items were reversed so that a higher score indicated a more positive evaluation than a lower score.

Items for Job Success asked such questions as, "How capable of a worker do you think this person is?" "How financially successful will this person be in her career?" Examples of items on the Likability subscale were "How well-liked will this person be in the Montgomery community?" and "How popular with friends do you think this person is?" Two items from the Personal Adjustment subscale were, "How many personal problems is this person likely to have?" and "What kinds of family relationships is this person likely to have?"

To see if the *a priori* factors bore out empirically, we did a confirmatory factor analysis. The resulting empirical factors are described in the Results section. These factors make up the attitudinal dependent variables.

Behavioral intent variables were measured by whether the participant volunteered or declined to offer various levels of hospitality. There were four levels ranging from easy to offer (agreeing to be telephoned by the job candidate to answer questions) to moderate (agreeing to meet for coffee/lunch or dinner/movie) to the more difficult (agreeing to show the candidate around the city for part of day).

An actual behavioral variable was whether the participant provided his or her name and telephone number so that the offered hospitality could be acted upon. This item was scored as

furnished or not furnished. Both the name and the number had to be provided for the participant to be scored "furnished." If only the name or the number was provided or the item was left blank, the item was scored "not furnished."

Independent Variables

Country of origin of the job candidate was the main variable of interest. But ethnicity and gender of the student evaluator were recognized as also being important variables that may affect the evaluator's attitude and behavior. Therefore these two variables were also considered.

Results

The first question in considering the results is whether the main variable of interest was salient enough to the participants. Eighty-five percent of the participants correctly recalled the country of origin, and 86% correctly recalled her GPA. GPA, of course, was not of interest but was included to compare to country of origin. This finding allowed the conclude that enough of the participants were aware of the primary variable: country of origin, which we will refer to simply as origin.

Although origin was the main variable of interest, there were two other variables that could be important: gender and ethnicity of the participant. For this reason the effects of all three of these variables were examined, although the study was designed primarily to investigate country of origin of the person being evaluated.

Rating Scales

Recall that the 14-item rating scale was designed to tap three dimensions: Job Success, Likability, and Personal Adjustment. we did a confirmatory factor analysis to see if the empirical factors matched the *a priori* ones. Orthogonal and oblique rotations produced the same

distribution of items over three factors. The results of the factor analysis confirmed the *a priori* factors, with only two items loading on a factor different from the we had conceptualized it as belonging to. So we decided to retain the original *a priori* scales. The internal consistencies, as measured by Cronbach alphas were as follows: .81 for the full scale, .92 for Job Success, .89 for Likability, and .90 for Adjustment. The Pearson correlation coefficients among the full scale and the three subscales were as follows: Full scale with Job Success (.82), Likability (.86), and Adjustment (.87). Job Success with Likability (.59); Job Success with Adjustment (.53); and Likability with Adjustment (63).

To determine whether the participants judged the job candidate differently depending on what country she came from, we did a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), with country of origin as the independent variable (Africa, China, France, India, and USA) and the Rating scales as the dependent variable. Although the results were only marginal, with there being no significant differences among the 5 countries, we noticed a distinct pattern among the group means. When the job candidate was described as being from the Eastern countries, she was rated more favorably than when she was from the African country but not as favorably as when she was from the Western countries. Based on this observation, we decided to combine countries by region: India and China were grouped to form countries in the East, USA and France were joined to form the West group, and Kenya was left as the only country in the Africa group. The means for these groups on the Rating scales can be seen in Table 1. We then did a second one-way analysis of variance (unequal Ns) with results, which can be viewed in Table 2. The means on the full scale were significantly different, as were the means on the Likability and Adjustment subscales. Post-hoc Scheffe comparisons revealed that the significant differences lay between the

Africa and West groups. These results indicate that students rated job candidates from the West as more likable and better adjusted than they did candidates from Africa. In terms of likelihood to succeed on the job, however, the American students evaluated the candidates equally, regardless of what countries they originated from.

As mentioned earlier, we suspected that ethnicity and gender of the evaluators might affect their ratings. To test this possibility, we did t-tests comparing the mean evaluations on each scale between men and women, and between Whites and ethnic minorities. The results were significant for gender, with women making more favorable evaluations than men. Whites and minorities, however, made equal evaluations.

Because gender proved to be a significant factor that needed to be controlled for, we did an analysis of co-variance (ANCOVA), with gender as the co-variate. The pattern of results, which can be seen in Table 3, stay the same and indicate that origin of the candidates remained a significant variable, even after the variance contributed by gender was accounted for. Post-hoc comparisons (Scheffe) revealed that students, regardless of whether they were male or female, again made more favorable overall evaluations, when the job candidate was from the West than they did when she was from Africa. The differences between East and the other groups were not significant. The same patterns held for the evaluations of Likability and Adjustment. The results on Job Success were not significant.

Hospitality Variables

Recall that we included some measures of behavioral intention. These were how much hospitality the participants volunteered to offer. Three measures were agreeing to allow the newcomer to telephone them for information (Call); volunteering to meet the newcomer for

coffee or lunch or dinner or a movie (Meet); and willingness to show the newcomer around the city for part of a day (Tour). A behavioral measure was whether the participant actually furnished his or her name and telephone number (Phoname), purportedly so that we could contact the participant to arrange the hospitality.

Results of Chi-square analyses with origin as the independent variable were nonsignificant, indicating that students were willing to be equally hospitable to the job candidate, regardless of what country she originated from.

Again, because ethnicity and gender might play a role in willingness to provide hospitality, we looked at these variables as well. When gender was the independent variable there were no significant differences (Call approached significance), indicating that men and women were equally willing to be hospitable. The picture changed, however, when the participant's ethnicity was examined. Ethnic minorities were significantly more willing to offer hospitality on the Meet and Tour measures than Whites were. (Table 5) The Call measure was marginally significant. These results indicate that ethnic minorities were more willing than Whites to meet and entertain the newcomer. In terms of making it possible by actually providing their name and telephone number, the difference was not significant.

Summary

To summarize the findings, American students made more favorable evaluations of job candidates who originated from western countries than from an African country. The evaluations were similar, however, between East versus West origins and between East versus African origins. Students made no such distinctions when volunteering to provide hospitality. However,

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gender and ethnicity of the student proved to be important variables but will not be further discussed in this paper, as they were not the variables of interest.

Discussion

In interpreting the findings of the current study, we will first consider the participants' evaluations and then look at how hospitable they were. The evaluation findings were mixed, offering good and bad news. The good news is that American students seem to think a migrant's ethnic background does not bear on the likelihood of succeeding on the job. The bad news is that this background does affect how much they like the migrant and how personally adjusted they think she is. They judged newcomers from Kenya less favorably than they judged those from France or from Kansas City. They made no such distinctions about candidates from India and China. Perhaps it should be mentioned that there is some ambiguity in the interpretation of the these results because the Job Success items were more obvious and, therefore, may have had a greater pull on the participants to respond in a socially desirable fashion, whereas the Likability and Adjustment items were more subtle.

These findings partially match those of the previous study, of which the current one is an extension. Mehta (1996) found that international students from Africa, East Asia, and South Asia perceived more prejudice than those from Western countries. In the case of African and Western migrants, then, their perceptions fit reality. American students *are* more prejudiced toward newcomers from Africa than from Western countries.

Why would American students think a foreigner from Africa has poorer family relationships and more personal problems than one from France? Why would they perceive her to be less likable? Social cognitive theory explains prejudice in terms of the way people think of

others. We tend to divide the world into "us" and "them." We see members of our own group as individuals, whereas members of the outgroup are lumped together. People tend to think of all members of the outgroup as much the same (Jones, Wood, & Quattrone, 1981; Messick & Mackie, 1989). From this perception is where the *"They're all alike to me"* sentiment emerges. We also prefer people whom we perceive to be part of the ingroup to those who are part of the outgroup. Even though Europeans are foreigners, compared to Africans, they are more like the American ingroup. Consequently we judge someone from France more favorably than we judge someone from Kenya.

Social dominance theory's (Sidanius, Devereux, & Pratt, 1992) idea that prejudice toward subordinate groups is linked to attempts to maintain a hierarchical social structure was supported by the current findings of greater prejudice toward African newcomers than toward Western ones. Kenyans come from a poorer country than French immigrants do, and hence have a lower status than the French. The results also support a "a weaker and modified version of Rokeach's (1960) belief congruence theory" (Brown, 1995, p. 180), which suggests that the more a culture is seen as being different from ours, the more threatened we are against its people who must have different values and beliefs from ours. Consequently we are less hostile toward a foreigner from a Western culture from an African one. The results from the current study also support the more recent symbolic racism theory (McConahay & Hough, 1976; Sears, 1988), which is similar to the one just described.

The current findings do not, however, lend support to the Social Identity Theory (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1986), which would predict a U-shaped curve of prejudice, with more bias toward very similar and very dissimilar groups and less bias toward moderately similar groups. In

this theory, "similarity would be regarded as threatening, and hence be reacted to aversely" (Brown, 1996, p. 180). The current results also do not support realistic group conflict theory (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1976; Sherif, 1966), nor the broader idea of realistic threats (Stephan & Stephan, 1996), which predicts more prejudice toward groups that pose greater threats to the political and economic power of the ingroup. Because Asian immigrants are the ones who are seen as "taking jobs away from Americans," it should have been the Chinese and Indian foreigners who were perceived the least favorably in the current study, not the Kenyans.

Differences in cultural similarity might explain why job candidates from Eastern countries were judged no more or less favorably than the candidates from Africa and Western countries. But there is also another explanation and this has to do with race. While American students, regardless of their own ethnicity, preferred presumably Caucasian newcomers and were prejudiced against presumably Black ones, they showed no particular favor or disfavor toward Asian migrants (Chinese and Indian). This finding matches those of previous studies that show that both Whites and Blacks in this country devalue Blacks (e.g., Mathur & Kalia, 1984; Wong, Derlega, & Colson, 1988). The explanation lies, perhaps, in this country's history of Black slavery. In other countries, such as England, Canada, and Australia, Asians, especially Indians, are the target of much racism, and in Canada's case, Indians are ranked lower than Blacks (Henry, 1983). American racism toward Blacks, however, does not inoculate Asians from racism, as the instances of hate crimes against Asian-Americans and Asian bashing attest (Lee & Hall, 1994). In the current study there was a consistent pattern of Chinese and Indian immigrants being evaluated lower, though not statistically significantly, than Caucasian newcomers.

It is not surprising that in the context of employment, prejudice might surface among American students. In recent times, many Americans have expressed fear that immigrants are taking jobs away from them, though others argue convincingly that this fear is unfounded. Currently this country is in the midst of a strong anti-immigration backlash. In a recent poll conducted by a popular news magazine, 60% viewed immigration as bad for the United States (Morganthau, 1993). Students, who are worried about finding jobs, may feel particularly threatened and consequently express stronger anti-immigrant sentiments. Employment status is linked to sel-esteem, and we know that when self-esteem is threatened, people become even more negative about members of the out-group (Meindl & Lerner, 1985).

More optimistic were the hospitality findings. Although the participants' *attitudes* were prejudicial, when it came to volunteering to help foreign newcomers, they did not discriminate. They indicated a willingness to be just as hospitable to someone from Africa, as they were to someone from Europe, Asia, or the U.S. They were just as willing to be telephoned by the newcomer to answer questions, meet her, entertain her, and show her around the city, regardless of where she was from. And when it came to committing oneself a little bit more by providing one's name and telephone number, so the hospitality could actually be arranged, a surprising 52% did so. And again, it made no difference where the newcomer was from.

These findings match those of Evans and Kelley (1991), who found that although Australian employers indicate a willingness to discriminate against immigrants, in reality they did not, at least in terms of hiring, pay, and promotion. In the case of employers, profit is likely to the motive that keeps them from discriminating. If it were profitable to discriminate, they probably would.

But what about for the American students? Why do they not discriminate when they are in fact prejudiced? One possibility is that the idea of racism has entered into people's consciousness enough so that they are aware that it is not socially acceptable to treat people differently because of their ethnicity. They realize that they ought not to appear racist. They do, however, still hold racist attitudes. This study certainly is not the first to observe that attitudes and behaviors do not always correspond (e.g., Wicker, 1969). Nor are we the first to suggest that behaviors might change before attitudes. Prejudice has often been a poor predictor of discrimination (e.g., LaPierre, 1934; Linn, 1965). Although it is disheartening to see American students hold prejudicial attitudes toward foreigners, it is encouraging that the students seem unwilling to translate their attitudes into behavior.

Limitations

A few shortcomings of the study should be mentioned. Most important is that there were no, or at best only one, true behavioral measures. The hospitality variables approximated behaviors, but the participants were still being asked about what they would do, rather than having their behavior directly measured. The Phoname variable arguably was a measure of behavior (whether the participant provide his or her name and telephone number) but even here, participants must have known they could later refuse to provide the hospitality they had previously offered. Second, by combining the France and Kansas City groups into a West group, presumed race and foreignness became confounded. But in future studies it would be nice to tease apart true foreignness and race. Finally the target stimulus was female, which limits the generalizability of the results. Future studies of this kind should include both male and female immigrants.

Future Directions

The Mehta (1995) finding that foreign students from China perceive more prejudice than those from India is at odds with results from the current study that reveal no differences in amount of actual prejudice toward these two groups. This discrepancy should be explored and explained.

The gender and ethnicity findings, although not within the scope of this paper, are interesting and ought to be pursued. In fact we are doing so in a separate paper. It would be worthwhile to follow up on why women seem to give higher evaluations to foreigners than men do, and why ethnic minorities appear more willing than Whites to offer hospitality.

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Table 1

Means

Rating Scales by Origin

	Africa	East	West
Full Scale	64.3[a]	66.8	68.3[b]
Job Success	23.7	24.4	24.4
Likability	18.4[a]	19.1	19.9[b]
Personal Adjustment	22.2[a]	23.3	24.0[b]

Note: Higher scores indicate more favorable ratings. Different letters indicate means are significantly different

Table 2

ANOVA

Scale	df	*F*	*p*	Scheffe
Full	2	3.37	.04	Africa-West
Job Success	2	0.86	n.s.	
Likability	2	3.78	.02	Africa-West
Personal Adjustment	2	3.78	.02	Africa-West

Table 3

ANCOVA

Scale	df	*F*	*p*	Scheffe
Full	3	5.53	.001	
gender	1	9.55	.001	
origin	2	2.67	.07	Africa-West
Job Success	3	2.12	n.s.	
Likability	3	4.38	.005	
gender	1	5.41	.02	
origin	2	3.20	.04	Africa-West
Personal Adjustment	3	6.11	.0005	
gender	1	10.43	.001	
origin	2	3.02	.05	Africa-West